

Book Review

THAT USED TO BE US

What Went Wrong With America- And How It Can Come Back

Authors: **Thomas L. Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum**

Publisher: Little, Brown Book Group

“It is neither the stronger of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change”..... Evolutionary Theory.

Thomas L Friedman, an internally acclaimed author, Pulitzer prize winning New York Time columnist and reporter, along with Michael Mandelbaum, Professor and Director of American Foreign Policy at The John Hopkins University School of Advanced Internal Studies presents prescription for ailing America in their book, 'That Used To Be Us': What Went Wrong With America- And How It Can Come Back. The indicators are its non responsiveness towards the impacts of globalization, the revolution of information technology, nation's fiscal deficit and excessive and unjustified energy consumption. These four chronic conditions and the nations approach towards them shall determine the length and quality of American Life for decades to come.

According to the authors, to face these challenges there are two preconditions. One is recognizing these challenges, which the country had so far been slow. The other is remembering how they had developed strength to face similar situations in the past. As Bill Gates put it “What was all that good stuff we had that other people copied?”

The cause of sickness, as the authors identified are complacency and absence of unified willpower and political action towards changes that is taking place in the entire world which exposed America to the

much smaller but relative faster countries like China, India, Brazil, Singapore and other developing countries. They prescribed that the remedy is not blindly copying any of the processes which these countries follow but to develop an unique formula which suits America to survive in a world which had traditionally been dominated by them.

The cold war had blindfolded Americans and masked them with false pride and accomplishment. The same is slowly distracting them from being competitive and today's America is slowly and unknowingly loosing ground beneath its feet. The book provides many examples to prove the points that other countries, because of sheer speed, passion, confidence and backed by cheap and technically well qualified intelligent people have already surpassed America in many fronts

The worst economic crisis in eight decades which the country had seen recently, had sadly affected American households loosing an estimated \$ 10 trillion and rise of unemployment to a whooping 9%.

Bio Technology, Telecommunication, 3G, World Wide Web, Social Networking sites like Face book, Twitter, Internet has made the world much smaller and faster. Anyone can have access to almost what the others have access to. People today not only have their own information access system to understand what is going on inside and outside their own country but also discuss the same with one another online.

From the above described areas of review, the conclusion that emerges is, America is loosing its supremacy. But does it have a plan to gain back the same?

Friedman and Mandelbaum believe that the recovery of American greatness is within reach . They demonstrate that when properly interpreted, American history itself provides that roadmap to its recovery through a five pronged formula which shall enable them to face the challenges successfully. The history of America is highlighted by innumerable bold individuals whose actions have brought the country out of many messes in the past and propose a clear way of the ditch where

America has fallen at present. According to the authors, rediscovery of the traditions that the country is famous for, is the key.

That Used to Be US is both a soul searching exercise for the country and also a blueprint for its revival.

Reviewed by:
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